action for the same. Government of Gujarat has granted licences for laying CNG network in the cities of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Government of Uttar Pradesh, through UPSIDC, has issued No Objection Certificates for implementation of city gas distribution projects in Lucknow, NOIDA, Moradabad and Ghaziabad. Similarly, Government of Haryana has granted No Objection Certificate for city gas distribution projects in Faridabad and Gurgaon. Government of Rajasthan has invited Expression of Interest for gas distribution in the State.

(c) The Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order given in advisory jurisdiction on 25th March, 2004 in the Special Reference No. 1/2001 has opined that natural gas, including Liquefied Natural Gas, is a Union subject covered under Entry 53 of the Union List. Accordingly, the Union has exclusive legislative competence to enact laws on natural gas. The States have no legislative competence to make laws on the subject of natural gas.

Under Article 73 of the constitution, the executive power of the Union extends to these matters, with respect to which Parliament has the power to make laws. In the light of the same, State Governments have no power to authorize setting up of CNG filling stations.

Further, the Government has notified, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006, on April 3, 2006 which envisages this Board's authorization to entities to lay, build, operate or expand city or local natural gas distribution network. Accordingly, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board has to issue authorizations for city gas distribution projects.

(d) to (g) Yes, Sir. The Government is in the process of finalizing the policy for development of Natural gas Pipelines and City or Local Natural Gas Distribution Networks. The policy is being finalized in consultation with all stakeholders. The views and comments of various stakeholders were invited on the draft pipeline policy. Meetings with the stakeholders have been held in the months of June, July and October, 2006.

Exploration venture with Russia

2226. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has proposed an exploration venture

with Russian gas major Gazprom and sought a stake in the Sakhalin-III oil and gas project in the far east;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government have offered Russian firms a stake in Indian Oil Corporation's proposed 4 billion dollar Paradip refinery and petrochemical project in Orissa; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINESHA J. PATEL): (a) ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), has evinced keen interest to tie up with either Gazprom or Rosneft along with other Russian oil companies to bid for the prospective group of oil and gas exploration blocks in Sakhalin-III, which the Russian Government intends to put for future auction.

(b) Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) has informed that they have not initiated discussions with any Russian firm for participation in its integrated refinery cum petrochemical complex at Paradeep in Orissa.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b) above.

Merger of BRPL with IOC

2227. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the reason for the delay in merger process of Bongaigaon Refinery Petrochemical Limited (BRPL) with India Oil Corporation and time-frame, if any, to complete the same;

(b) the development works taken up by the IOC for BRPL since its take-over as the subsidiary industry in the year, 2002; and

(c) the record of annual turnover of BRPL after becoming subsidiary unit of IOC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINESHA J. PATEL): (a) The proposal of merger of Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemical Limited (BRPL) with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) was accorded 'in principle' approval by Board of IOC in June, 2005. The appointment of independent valuers and merchant